The Peptides

Analysis, Synthesis, Biology

VOLUME 2 Special Methods in Peptide Synthesis, Part A

Edited by

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1980

ACADEMIC PRESS
A Subsidiary of Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers
New York London Toronto Sydney San Francisco

ACADEMIC PRESS, INC.
111 Fifth Avenue, New York, New York 10003

United Kingdom Edition published by
ACADEMIC PRESS, INC. (LONDON) LTD.
24/28 Oval Road, London NW1 7DX

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Main entry under title:

The Peptides.
Includes bibliographical references and index.
CONTENTS: v. 1. Major methods of peptide bond Formation.--[etc.]--v. 3. Protection of functional groups in peptide synthesis.
1. Peptides. I. Gross, Erhard. II. Meienhofer, Johannes. [DNLM: 1. Peptides. QU68 P424]
QP552.P4P47 574.1'9245 78-31958
ISBN 0-12-304202-X (v. 2)

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

79 80 81 82 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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I. INTRODUCTION

The science and art of peptide synthesis was founded at the beginning of the twentieth century by Emil Fischer and Theodor Curtius, and has steadily been developed into a discipline of great power and sophistication. The classical methodology has been reviewed by Greenstein and Winitz (1961), Schröder and Lübke (1965), Wünsch (1974), Bodanszky *et al.* (1976), Finn and Hofmann (1976), and in these volumes of "The Peptides." However, as recently as 15 years ago, the successful synthesis of biologically active materials still required considerable investments of time, effort, and manpower. Perhaps the most intimidating aspect of the field has been the need to purify, by discriminating methods, all intermediates of lengthy multistep routes, a non-routine and demanding task. The problem is made all the more challenging by the unpredictable solubility characteristics of the various intermediates.

Solid-phase peptide synthesis was conceived in 1959, at a time when chromatography on insoluble resins was being applied with great success to the analysis of amino acids, peptides, and proteins. It was reasoned that by attaching a growing peptide chain to an insoluble polymeric support, excess reagents and by-products from the synthetic cycles could be removed by simple filtration and washing steps. Thus, the purification problem of classical methods of peptide synthesis ought to be readily circumvented, while most of the highly honed chemistry of coupling and functional group protection was expected to be readily adaptable to the new strategy. As an added benefit, the entire solid-phase procedure was predicted to be amenable to automation. The feasibility of these ideas was first shown by the synthesis of the crystalline tetrapeptide L-leucyl-L-alanyl-glycyl-L-valine (Merrifield, 1962, 1963). At about the same time, Letsinger and Kornet (1963) reported the polymer-supported synthesis of L-leucyl-glycine, using a different chemical approach. Further developments followed soon thereafter in several laboratories, and a useful and practical set of methods has evolved that will be the subject of this review.